

HON. JOSEPH HOWE

SPEECH

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# SPEECH

OF THE HON. JOSEPH H. OWEN,

*Delivered before the Provincial Assembly, on 9th February, 1857.*

MONDAY, February 9.

The Hon. Jos. Howe rose and said,—I have not hitherto interfered in this debate, because I felt that it was the duty of the members of the opposition to afford to the House and country full information upon the nature of the charges which they intended to prefer against the government, and upon which their want of confidence vote was based; and also, sir, because, not being a member of the Administration, I felt that it was more becoming to leave the defence of their acts to the leaders of the government themselves. But, sir, as some hon. gentlemen have seen fit, in the course of this debate, to refer to matters in which I have been to some extent personally interested—it is due to the members of this House—to the country generally, and to those under whom I serve, not to shrink from a full, free and impartial explanation of the matters to which they have referred, and that I should give my opinions upon the question at issue. At the outset I admit that the discussion of this Resolution is to the leader of the government sufficiently perplexing, deserted as he has been by a section of the usual supporters of the government, combined with the threatening intimation that the defection will increase, until it includes every man in this Assembly belonging to a particular church. It may be, sir, that one or two hon. gentleman, who, though not belonging to that Church, represent constituencies that do. may be disposed to throw themselves, however reluctantly, into the ranks of the opposition. Sir, in view of these indications, I approach this discussion in the belief that the administration is to be weakened by the secession of a body of its ancient supporters, and perhaps overthrown by an unnatural combination. Look then to what may ensue, let us see by whom the existing administration are to be succeeded. I hold in my hand a list of the members, as they are assumed to range themselves on either side—and as it is well known that gentlemen on both sides acquainted with the elements composing this House make calculations generally pretty accurate, I think I may assume mine to be authentic. Sir, when the debate is ended and the division takes place, the leader of the government may find himself in a minority. He will then be compelled to resign, appeal to the country, or to strengthen himself by reconstructing the Cabinet. In view of either

alternative every man in this House has a right humbly to express his opinion.

Sir, I was not a member of this Legislature at the last Session. I have not been a member of the executive since 1854, and therefore do not feel it incumbent on me to defend the policy of the government from that period until now; I am not answerable, during the interim, for acts done or acts not done. When I resigned the office of Provincial Secretary in 1854, and assumed the direction of the Railway Board, I believed that to a large extent my political life was over; I had no desire to intermingle or interfere, as from time to time has been asserted, in the party or political struggles that were going on.—And Sir, in the presence of Gentlemen who can contradict me, I affirm that from the time I retired I never attended a Cabinet Council but one, and limited my intercourse with the Queen's Representative to the reception of the usual courtesies, and the payment of proper respect. Nor had I any connection whatever with government affairs, except when members of the administration chose to consult or converse with me as gentlemen are in the habit of doing with their friends and supporters. But, Sir, I will not conceal from you that the curiosity excusable in all old Politicians occasionally induced me to enter the lobby and listen to the debates. Sir, there are gentlemen who sit around me now who know that had I had the slightest desire to interfere with the action of the Administration, the opportunity was presented me more than once last session; and if I had wished to join the government a similar opportunity was offered during the recess. I stand here then, in the presence of those who can contradict me if what I say is not true, and boldly assert that I never interfered with the action of the Executive, except when honored with the confidence of old friends and asked for my advice; nor have I taken a single step in the least degree to embarrass those with whom I had formerly acted in concert. Sir, I may say that when I assumed the chief Commissionership of the Railway Board, not only had I the confidence of both parties in this House but the sincere respect of a large majority of the Legislature. I acquired that respect and confidence from the course which I pursued, without reference to old party contests. But, Sir, whatever may occur let it not be supposed that in this suppositious ship-

wreck I shall prove false to old principles or abandon old connections, or that I shall yield up that honourable respect which I believe I have maintained unsullied from the outset of my political career down to the present hour.

Sir, as I have performed my public duty for five months, carrying my life in my hand—I will perform that duty now if my office be the sacrifice. (hear and cheers.) Let a hostile vote overwhelm the Administration, for hostile combinations I admit are looming in the distance—that vote resulting from combinations of Catholics and Conservatives, formed upon no principle but revenge, and proving nothing but that a small minority in the country, by attaching itself, for personal considerations, to either side, may turn the scale—from that moment I can only say to them I will be no officer of theirs. Sir, in my public career I think I have maintained something of position and character, and I make this statement broadly that gentlemen on both sides may know and understand thoroughly the position I occupy and the line to which I intend firmly to adhere.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me survey the ground which all parties occupy, at this moment. The combination opposite may displace this government by a majority of one or two. Are we to have the old Falkland spectacle repeated over again? Sir, they may succeed in displacing this Administration and put another in its place. Suppose this done. Such a chance combination might, however devoid of principle, succeed, but the people of Nova Scotia will overthrow them at last, and in the meantime the same exhibition will take place that occurred from 1844 to 1848. But suppose my honorable and learned friend the Attorney General is defeated by a vote or two; he cannot conduct the Government, nor is it incumbent on him to resign,—he may try the experiment of re-constructing the Cabinet, and if that fails he has another resort,—a fair and manly appeal to the constituencies of the country.

Sir, it is due to hon. gentlemen to turn their attention to another view of this question. An opposition, to entitle themselves to displace a Government must shew, not only that the Cabinet do not deserve the confidence of the House—but that they (the opposition) are prepared to submit measures of general public utility and possess the ability to carry them into operation. What then, I ask, are the measures which this new Government are to bring with them into the Administration? I presume the Maine Liquor Law,—to which the leading minds

in the opposition are pledged,—will be one. Sir, I have been charged with many things by Irishmen, or by those who have been misleading them of late, but whatever injury I have done to them, however I may have run counter to their prejudices or feelings, I have never tried to stop their grog. (Laughter.) Let the learned member for Annapolis try that, and to be consistent he must, and he would soon find himself confronted by the same elements that shattered Mr. Tilly's Government in New Brunswick.

Sir, there is another measure to be introduced by the hon. and learned member for Annapolis: I allude to the Municipal Incorporation Bill—the decision of this country upon which no man more sincerely regrets than I do, for I am now and have ever been in favor of the principle of Municipal Incorporation, altho' I do not pledge myself to all the complicated machinery of this bill. I trust that we shall yet be prepared to assume the duties which I think should devolve upon every member of this Legislature, and deal with this question irrespective of local prejudice.

The learned and hon. member may also attempt to introduce his Elective Legislative Council Bill. It may just so happen that he may obtain a majority to sanction and sustain that constitutional change; but I much doubt it.

And therefore, sir, having reviewed the various measures which, in view of the learned and hon. member's accession to office, he may be prepared to submit, I can see no necessity for a change in the administration; no great question which he is prepared to propound and carry out, of a character beneficial to the country, to which the present Government would not also yield their hearty concurrence and support.—[Interruption from the Gallery.]

I know the value of the applause or disapprobation which comes from that quarter. Honorable gentlemen of the Opposition have, in past times, had their share.

But to return to the question before us— I was requested to attend a meeting of the Cabinet, when certain despatches and papers were placed in my hands for perusal, by Sir Gaspard LeMarchant, in which it was suggested by certain officers and others in the United States that the British Army in the Crimea might be filled up by recruits drawn from that territory. It has been said from time to time that this business of recruiting originated with me: that Mr. Howe was the man who initiated it for purposes of his own. Let me say, sir, that I never heard of the question nor conceived any such idea, until those papers were submitted to me, in which it was represented by one officer in New York that 30,000

men could be got to recruit the armies of the mother country. Her Majesty's Government desired that the experiment should be tried.

If that suggestion was to be acted upon, it followed as a matter of course that the Government should immediately communicate with the Minister at Washington, and ascertain whether or not this statement was correct. When the papers were put into my hands, what course did I recommend? I put it to any man if I did not respect his Excellency's constitutional advisers! My advice was—send a member of the Executive to Washington at once with the papers in his desk. Let communication be opened promptly between your Excellency and the British Minister; and be guided altogether by the instructions now received after that communication has been made. After having given this advice, I did not wait to discuss the proposition. The soundness of that advice no man could question. In the first place no risk of interception could be run, and in the winter letters do not pass to and fro so rapidly; and speed and secrecy were the two great objects to be secured. Having tendered them that advice, I retired from the Council, not wanting to take any part in their deliberations. An hour or two afterwards I was waited upon by an officer of the Government; I am not sure whether Sir Gaspard did not do me the honor to communicate that the Council had unanimously selected me to go on this mission. Now, sir, let me say that if there was anything unnatural or dishonorable in the course pursued by the government, or the acceptance of this mission by myself—the shame was shared by the hon. Michael Tobin who sit at the Council Board, a member of the Executive which sent me to the United States—(Hear, hear.) Of that Council, too, my late deceased friend the hon. James McLeod, a Catholic himself, and representing a Catholic constituency—formed one. Sir, the last named gentleman had been for years my nearest friend and earnest supporter. He had stood by my side in many a hard fought battle. I subsequently stood beside his death bed, as I would stand by his memory now, and maintain his incorruptible integrity—even if every Catholic in the country were to desert me and my party to-morrow. Then, sir, I say that if it was disgraceful and dishonorable in me to assume the responsibility of that mission, the Catholics in Halifax and the country ever must know that the disgrace and dishonor were shared by the hon. Michael Tobin and by my friend the hon. James McLeod. But there was neither disgrace nor dishonor in the mission. Did I desire to go? Was it a service to

be coveted? The steamer had left; there was no way of getting to the United States but by a sailing vessel, and I was compelled to leave my family and business; public and private, at a notice of but a few hours. On communicating the decision of the Council, his Excellency did me the honour to say, that as an old officer in a former administration, and possessing his confidence, it was his desire and wish that I should go. I put it to you sir, and every man of spirit and independence in this House, on either side of politics, liberal or conservative, whether such a command from the representative of sovereignty should not have been obeyed. There is not one who would not have gone and done his duty in such an emergency. If, then, the act was dishonourable in its inception, I give you the names of those who were parties to the dishonor. What right, then, have these men to claim the sympathies of this Country? in whole or in part—because the commands of his Excellency were complied with? If, when the perils of impending war threatened the security of the empire, Joseph Howe was wrong to lend his aid in recruiting its decimated armies; in God's name do not let Mr. Michael Tobin escape the obloquy. Let him who assented to the errand share the blame. (Here the hon. member was interrupted by noise in the gallery.)

The hon. the Speaker said, these interruptions will not be permitted; if they are repeated again gentlemen of this House have the privilege of exercising the constitutional right. A voice—"then you must clear the galleries."

Mr. Howe resumed. This recruiting business then did not originate with me, but with parties in the United States, who expressed anxiety to serve in the armies of England. My first duty was, on returning from Washington, to put myself in communication with them—and immediately on my arrival in New York a person, at the request of an officer in the British service, called upon me, introduced himself, and expressed his anxiety, being of British descent, to aid in the object of my mission. (The hon. gentleman was here again interrupted by expressions of disapprobation from the gallery.) The Sergeant-at-Arms was here requested to enforce silence.

Mr. Howe again resumed. All public men must take their chance of these ebullitions of feeling—often have I seen the hon. member for Annapolis similarly treated. I can only feel that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

Hon. J. W. Johnston, humourously. To which of the sexes does the honorable gentleman conceive that I belong? (Great laughter.)

Hon. Mr. Howe.—I was proceeding to say that a party claiming to be of British descent, expressed his desire to serve in the Crimean Army, and stated that he was prepared to bring to Nova Scotia a body of men for enlistment provided a commission were ensured him. I have no hesitation in saying that I assumed the responsibility of promising that the position he sought should be conferred, provided he complied with the condition. That individual subsequently sent 60 or 100 men to this Province. If they were deceived it was not by me or with my approbation or consent. He who sent them was not such a fool as to believe that any power could compel them to enlist unless they desired it—and my impression has always been that those men knew where they were going and for what purpose, although of that fact I had no personal knowledge, for at the time they left Boston I was in New York.

¶ Sir, at that time the City of New York was in a ferment. For every Irishman in Halifax there are 20 there. They are rather excitable here sometimes. I do not wish to offend them by saying that they are susceptible of excitement even in Halifax. And to so great a height had the mercury risen that with the transactions then convulsing the old world, that great city was boiling like a pot. Was it right then for Mr Wm. Condon, under such circumstances, to send telegraphic messages to the United States, if not to the outlawed criminals of England, at least to newspapers advocating principles antagonistic to her welfare, the effect of which was to point the finger of every excitable Irishman at my head? There are two gentlemen in this city now who called at my lodgings in New York, and saw me depart for an adjoining State—merchants of a highly respectable standing—they can tell the state of feeling then existing there. If any man, animated by a desire to do me injury, had pointed that mob to my hotel door, I do not believe that my life would have been worth an hour's purchase. (Laughter.)

Sir, I discharged my duty, fulfilled my mission and returned to Nova Scotia. I could not but feel that Mr. Wm. Condon had committed a great imprudence,—but did I call the attention of Government to the conduct of its officer? Did I make any vindictive attempt to deprive him of his office, or injure him in his private fortunes? I did not. On one occasion he undertook to give me an explanation of his conduct, and I then gave him warning that the sentiments he entertained, if acted upon, would in course of time involve him in difficulty and embroil him with this country. I gave him that advice but took

no further action. Matters then went on until Her Majesty's Minister at Washington was dismissed and came to this City on his way from the United States to Great Britain. A public meeting was convened for the avowed object of passing an address to Mr. Crampton. I knew nothing of the movement, having been out of town until on the morning of the day when the meeting was to take place. I took up the morning paper at the breakfast table and there saw it announced. To the requisition I saw affixed the names of my hon. friends Mr. Esson and Mr. Annand, with others, strong supporters of the Liberal party side by side with that of Mr. Henry Pryor and many of the leading conservatives in this City, I did not believe it necessary for, or incumbent on me to attend that meeting, and I would not have attended it, were it not that while sitting in the Railway Office I was called on by the late Hon. Provincial Secretary—the present Judge Wilkins.

[The hon. gentleman was here again interrupted with hissing and coughing.]

Mr. Tobin.—I regret, Sir, that order cannot be kept, the dignity of this House must be maintained.

Mr. Archibald—Unless the audience maintain that decorous respect and quietude due to this Assembly, I shall exercise the privilege with which our Constitution invests every member of this House, and move that the galleries be cleared.

Hon. Mr. Howe resumed—I did hope that these slight ebullitions of feeling might be spared. I should be better pleased if the audience would listen to the simple detail of facts which I intend to give in narrating the progress of this transaction. [Loud laughter in the gallery.]

The hon. the Speaker, Order must be kept.

The Hon. Attorney General—It is perfectly clear from the turn which this Debate has taken that unless the rules of the House are observed it cannot go on. I have marked, when in former years, when I was Speaker of this House occasional expressions by the audience of applause or disapprobation—which were always promptly suppressed. But during the delivery of the Speech of my Hon. friend from Windsor, certain parties in the galleries have interrupted him every ten minutes. Sir, every member of this House should be permitted to exercise the first privilege of an Englishman—freedom of speech, unchallenged and unchecked—and if these interruptions are to be continued steps be taken to secure freedom of debate.

Hon. Mr. Howe again resumed. I was about to say, sir, that the present Judge



Wilkins called upon me, and at his request I attended the meeting. I went, believing that the passage of that address was a mere matter of form; but, sir, before I had been five minutes in the room I saw that there were present men, the representatives of a party in this country, who throughout the Russian War sympathised with the enemies of England; there they were, palpably and evidently desirous to defeat the object of the meeting. But there were also present a number of highly respectable Liberal and Conservative gentlemen representing the good feeling and loyalty of this country. I sat there, as I have said, with a degree of indifference—believing that the passage of the address was a mere matter of course—my mind being fixed on other scenes and transactions; when, to my surprise, up got an individual belonging to the party to whom I refer, surrounded by his friends, and commenced a tirade against Mr. Crampton, and which if sanctioned by the rejection of that address would have been equivalent to a vote of censure on myself. I put it, then, to any hon. gentleman whether, having gone upon a mission sanctioned by the Lieut.-Governor, performed to the best of my ability the service with which I was entrusted, and having returned, nothing having been done by me of which a British subject should be ashamed—was I to sit in that meeting, and see a small part of this population, whose sentiments I well knew, pass a vote of censure upon a British Minister who had acted in concert with this Government, under instructions received from the Crown. Mr. Speaker, I would have been a craven in heart and conduct, if I had sat by and allowed that disgraceful proceeding to pass unnoticed for a single instant. What did I do? The very moment I saw the intention and object of the combination present, I rose and vindicated the course I had pursued.

But sir, let me refer to the outrage which is familiar to every man's mind as the riot at Gourlay's shanty. What had I to do with that? Mr. Speaker the meanest man in Nova Scotia had ever from me a fair hearing and a manly decision on his case, and I think I am entitled to similar treatment. If I state an untruth, I do so in the hearing of those by whom I may be contradicted. What, then, I ask, had I to do with the origin of that riot? I had been for two and a half years Chief Commissioner of Railways in this Province, and conducted the business, with the assistance of able Commissioners, to the satisfaction of this House and country. During that period the poorest Irishman in Nova Scotia, had access to me by night and day; by me their belief was never stigmatized—

their rights disregarded; and there is not a man in Nova Scotia—Englishman, Irishman, Scotchman—Catholic, Episcopalian, or Dissenter—who can say that religion was ever taken into account in the progress of those works, or nationality considered. Sir, of the riots at Gourlay's shanty I knew nothing until three Magistrates had gone up the Windsor road, conducted a long investigation, returned to town and reported to the Executive. On the following morning, their reports were placed in my hands. The Magistrates who performed this duty were Mr. James Cochran, Mr. Shields and Mr. Jennings. Their report detailed outrages of a character unprecedented in this country; and with those in my hand on that morning, I was sent for to go down to the Secretary's office. The Sheriff was commanded to arrest the guilty parties. His answer was, that he dare not go into the woods to arrest them without troops. It has been said that I sent the troops. I had as much to do with sending the soldiers as you, sir. It was on the ordinary requisition of the High Sheriff that they were commanded to accompany him. I then thought it my duty to ride up the Windsor road. For what? To aid in arresting the parties? Most certainly not.

The machinery of the law was equal to that purpose, and I was too lame to go into the woods. But the Attorney and Solicitor General were both absent from town, and Mr. McCully and myself felt, both as Railway Commissioners and supporters of the Government, bound to grant to the Executive, in this extraordinary emergency, every assistance; and we felt that, in the employment of a military force, every precaution should be taken to guard against collision and bloodshed. Partly with an eye to these precautions, and chiefly to gather for myself, from knowing more of the people upon and along the line of the road than others, the real spirit of the scene and facts of the case, I got into a waggon and rode up to the half-way house with the Hon. Mr. Wilkins. Members around the benches can scarcely comprehend the state of feeling which the bloody atrocity at Gourlay's shanty had created all along the Windsor road. That outrage, perpetrated in the face of day, by 100 men, deliberately concentrated upon a lonely dwelling, had struck terror into every shanty on the railroad, and into every dwelling on the Windsor road. Every Protestant from the Eastern Counties—every Nova Scotian, of every creed, felt that his rights of industry, his life, his limbs, the sanctity of his dwelling, were held in sufferance—that he worked by day and laid down by night, at the mercy of a ruthless band of ruffians, organized and held together by

some power, and for some purpose, which they could not comprehend. Let me illustrate this state of feeling. We applied to a person, naturally a fearless man, who was building a shop at Bedford, to give us some men to act as special constables. He refused, telling Mr. Wilkins and I that he dare not, for fear that his shop would be burnt in the night. He at last only consented upon our assurance that troops were coming out, and that the law should be vindicated, and the spirit of disorder put down. We went on and accosted a Farmer, a few miles further up, a man of cool judgment and naturally fearless temperament. We asked him to let his sons turn out.—His answer was, we shall be all murdered in our beds if they do. We went on, to the nearest magistrate, who, unsupported in a scattered hamlet, was unnerved and uncertain what to do. At his house we found three or four men from Pictou and Cape Breton, with broken heads and bruised limbs; but the family were alarmed, as the rioters had threatened the inhabitants or those who gave the beaten shelter. We went on further, and in one house lay three or four fine young men, mangled and beaten in a miserable manner. The house where they lay was regarded as unsafe, and the women who nursed them believed that they were performing the offices of humanity at the risk of their lives. Such was the state of feeling on the Windsor road, and is it to be wondered at that I felt strongly?

When the law had been vindicated in this quarter, and tranquility restored, I rode over to the Eastern line, to ascertain if some of the rioters had not escaped in that direction. At Schultz's I was met by a messenger, on his way to town, to report that the Contractor and his Clerk had been driven off the line near Elmsdale. That the horses had been driven into the woods, Englishmen and Scotchmen beaten and frightened away, and that the works were in possession of a body of Irishmen, whom there was no peace officer in the neighborhood to control.

I went to Elmsdale, saw the Contractor and found it necessary to send to the Nine Mile River for a Magistrate—to investigate the matter. What were the state of the works in that quarter all that time? Sir, you may easily judge, when I say that few men went to bed in that neighborhood without weapons by their side. This was indeed a strange spectacle in Nova Scotia, where our people are accustomed to rest with doors unlocked in perfect security. From what I had seen and heard on the Windsor Road, from what I saw and heard at Elmsdale, I became convinced that there was a determination on the part of the Irish laborers to control the works, on both roads. Wherever there were a large number of Irishmen,

and a small number of Nova Scotians or Scotchmen from the east, the latter lived from day to day in a state of continual terror and alarm. A disposition was evinced on both lines to control these public works. I had seen indications of it and heard from the Contractors that such was the case. What was my plain duty? Was it to countenance or discourage such a spirit? There is not one right-minded man who hears me, that in his heart and conscience does not approve of the course which I adopted. It has been asked what had the Crampton Meeting to do with the Railway Riots. Let me give this House, the country, and you, sir, a single illustration. I rode up the Western Road with Mr. Wilkins, and met two sub-contractors, one an American, the other an Irishman. It never entered my mind for a single moment, that either of these men would refuse their assistance to bring the perpetrators of outrage to justice; and therefore when I met them I did not hesitate to consult with them to ask their assistance and advice. Sir, I subsequently had reason to believe, that one of those parties conveyed the information to the workmen on the Railway line, that parties were in search of the perpetrators: that, acting upon that information, some of the guilty were conveyed away. That information did not extend to the whole of the line, and therefore we were enabled to arrest some of the supposed rioters. Well, sir, when I returned to Halifax, I discovered that the rioters in the woods had a party of sympathisers in the city.

(The Hon. Gentleman was again interrupted by a noise in the galleries.)

When silence was restored—He said.

Those who do not like the truth told them at this moment, did not desire that these rioters should be arrested and brought to justice. Was it strange then, that, when at the Crampton Meeting, fresh from the woods, with these feelings operating upon my mind,—I saw an organized body of men entertaining and expressing sentiments hostile to the peace, and order of the empire, that my feelings should have been aroused; and that I should have felt strongly and spoken freely upon a subject so important as the maintenance of order and the security of life and property in our common Country. Sir, from the moment I declared my determination not to abet the treasonable and criminal proceedings of these lawless violators of the Peace—from the moment that I announced my determination, not to allow the heads of peaceful inhabitants to be broken and their shanties gutted—from that moment I was selected, and marked out by a party of this town, as the object of their especial vengeance; marked for degradation, slander, vituperation, and if possible for political extinction. Sir the day may come,

when Joseph Howe, for attempting to protect the homesreads and hearths of our Countrymen—for maintaining the honor of England—and attempting to recruit her wasted armies and exhausted strength shall be condemned in Nova Scotia, but I think that day is distant. (Shouts from the gallery.) Yes, Sir, I am under the impression that that day is far distant; a chance combination, may displace this Government, and elevate their opponents to power. But Mr. Speaker, I have seen many dark days and sunny ones too in this Country—days when I had not as many friends around me as at the present hour, and when my hold upon the affections and feelings of this people, was not as strong as it is at the present moment. If the clouds should lower and the storm burst, I shall meet the frowns of fortune with the same energy, firmness and determination with which I have encountered every vicissitude in my political life.

But, sir, did Mr. Joseph Howe come forward and attack Catholics as a body—assail Irishmen as a people, or as members of a church? He did not. He went about his business, and performed his public duty, giving no heed to what had been or to what might be done. How was he met? So exulting, so daring, so perfectly reckless had these people become, that no sooner were the ends of justice defeated than they came forward and boasted of it before the whole country, coupling my name with unmistakable threats that Protestants had better be careful lest they should be served after the same fashion; for fear Irishmen should break their heads and gut their shanties. When these publications appeared, I thought it high time that some man should speak out. Keenly as I felt, and knowing the feeling which would be aroused, I could not refrain from performing what I believed to be my duty. I was aware that some combination might endanger the position I held. Sir, let me say to the hon. gentlemen around me, that when I was previously in office, with 10 children depending upon me for support, that office was nothing—my public position was nothing—but what I believed to be just and true, that, regardless of consequences, I did. What I dared then, when office was of more consequence to me than it is at present, I dare now.—Therefore, sir, it is that I say I felt it my duty to brave the faction who were exciting in this city a spirit of disaffection to the British Crown, and whose conduct I felt would in the end produce alienation and dissension between classes in this country. It has been said that I entered the lists without challenge, in a needless, hasty, reckless manner. Sir, Mr. William Condon publishes two long letters, filled with gross person-

alities and scurilous abuse, aimed at my reputation, as a man and as a statesman, before I put before the country the views I entertained of his conduct. At last, some friend who had been looking on at this contest sent me an extract from the New York Citizen, which, till recently, I had never seen. Sir, I will put upon the table of this house a file of that paper, and by its contents I will let gentlemen judge of the sentiments it professes, and the policy it pursues with respect to England. There is scarcely a page which does not teem with foul abuse of the Mother country. It is filled with treason from one end to the other; and the information was conveyed to me that Mr. Wm. Condon was at one time, if he is not now, the agent and correspondent of that paper. I had borne with Mr. Condon's vagaries till at last patience was exhausted, and I felt that I should have been a party to the treason if I had not put the information before the country.

Let me say, sir, in the face of this Legislature,—in the presence of those who have known me both in public and private life for upwards of 30 years, that no inducement however strong,—no lure however tempting, could provoke me to persecute any man or body of men on account of religion,—and, altho', for purposes which it is not difficult to understand some parties are attempting to propegate this trash now—the time will come when the principles which have guided my public career for 30 years will be recognized and discerned by my actions of to-day. I claim equal justice for myself, I claim equal justice for every Catholic in the country. Turn to your journals—to your reports—to the pages of the public prints, and you will everywhere see my foot-prints. It may be that the pressure brought to bear upon some of my own friends may induce them to desert their ancient standard, believing that something is to be gained or achieved by going into opposition.—A word or two to these gentlemen, and but a word—I do not come here to explain or apologize—what is writ is writ, and what is said is said.

Throughout a long political life—throughout a long parliamentary career—I have been true to the friends with whom I started—to the principles which I entertained. The time may come, I say, when some of these friends may desert me and their party—some may do it willingly, but others will do it most reluctantly.—When the new administration is formed, Mr. Howe's office will be at its disposal. He will take his seat on these benches an independent member—will say that which he believes to be true and do that which he believes to be right. And sir all the combinations which can be formed will never coerce or intimidate me, confident that the heart and soul

of Nova Scotia is with me in this struggle.

During the time I was in the Government, I can confidently appeal to the hon. Gentlemen in this House, and ask whether or not I ever exhibited anxiety or desire to exclude Catholics on account of their creed from a fair share of Government patronage. Look around sir—do we not see Catholic Clergymen in most of the School Boards of the Country; Catholic Magistrates and Justices of the Peace—in all the County Commissions—and there is scarce a public department in the city where you do not find a Catholic official. My public life presents undeviating adherence to one principle—equal justice to all—and while I have ever done and will ever do justice to every man—be he Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, a Churchman, I have no hesitation in saying that I cannot, and will not be coerced into the suppression of sentiments which I believe to be just, and the prostration of the conduct which good men should condemn. For 7 or 8 years I was a member of an administration in which were into catholic members; and while in the cabinet, I have many times advocated the interests and claims of Catholics—when the men who sat beside me, did not know, or did not feel as much interest in their claims as I did. This I could prove if I dared to repeat the secrets of the Executive. How then do these men presume to assert that I have assailed the religious belief or the fair political standing of this body of Christians. I should be ashamed to perpetrate such an act, but I have attacked a party of Irishmen because I believed them to be disloyal and others, because I felt that they were prepared to sacrifice to faction and to party the peace and security of this country—if, in the performance of that which I believed to be a sacred duty, the disapprobation of those whom I had no intention to offend, follows the act, I must bear the weight of this censure as best I can. Sir, the foundation of all political respect must be principle;—men who band themselves together to uphold a party looking only to the dispensation of patronage and the reward of office, without regard to principle, or the measures which they intend to carry out, cannot long enjoy the confidence of the people, and do not form such an association as I believe our constitution contemplates. A party when its principles are gone, is little better than a dead carcase from which the life and spirit have fled—I thank the House for the attention with which they have heard me, and, I might almost say that I thank the audience. (The hon. gentleman was here interrupted by hisses from the gallery.)

The Hon. the Speaker.—Mr. Sergeant-at-Arms, order must be kept in the gallery.

Hon. Mr. Howe.—Oh, sir, I quite understand the influences at work. I know well the strings that move the puppets. I have not been so long mixed up in political life as to be entirely unacquainted with the elements of which society in this city is composed. Sir, I deemed it my duty to make this frank, and I trust clear statement of my conduct and principles; and, having done so, I leave the issue to be settled by this House. If the government is sustained, as I believe it should be, I am prepared to discharge my duty. If it fall, I shall share their degradation, and expiate my share in these transactions, by going into the cold shades of opposition.

Sir, I believe this legislature could be better employed than in this faction fight. The Kilkenny cats did something—they tore each other to pieces. But when the debate is ended, and we have divided, there will be nearly as many on the one side as the other, and all of us physically and mentally uninjured. I was once asked by an old sportsman, with whom I went fishing for salmon, after I had caught two or three, how I liked the sport; pretty well, said I, but after all, it is not half so exciting as a fortnight's debate in the Legislature, and a doubt as to the division. (Laughter.) The real difficulty is that there are certain persons who would at the present moment go any length and do anything, provided they could only get revenge upon men who have performed their public duty; and then we know there are certain other influences at work.

Let me say to the hon. member for Cumberland, that if I believed there existed, on the other side, the elements necessary for the formation of a stronger, wiser, or better administration than the present, I might be disposed to offer them no opposition and allow the experiment to be tried. But I do not believe that we should gain much by splitting this house in halves, and having the Province governed by a majority of one, as in the days of Lord Falkland. Does not every man know that the weakness of the administration from 1844 to '47 formed a serious obstacle to the advancement and improvement of the country. We may remain and debate here for a fortnight, and even then, if the gentlemen succeed, what have we gained?

I believe that the country, at this moment, requires thought, care, consideration, and work in its government; and it would not take me long to show that there are measures of great public utility, not indicated in the programme of the hon. and learned member for Annapolis, which our time would be better spent in perfecting.

I thank you again, sir, and the house, for the attention you have given to these explanations.







